

# CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY (CFSA)

## 2008 Quick Reference Guide

### CHOKING HAZARD PREVENTION

Children explore their world by putting things in their mouths. Any small object that can be swallowed by a child or infant can block their little airway passages. When the airway is completely blocked, the child cannot breathe. This may lead to permanent brain damage or death from lack of oxygen. **ANY ITEM THAT IS SMALL ENOUGH TO FIT INSIDE A CARDBOARD TOILET PAPER TUBE IS A CHOKING HAZARD.** It is very important for parents and caregivers to keep small items out of reach of little children. Parents and caregivers should not serve any food item that could possibly cause a choking hazard. Remember: choking hazards for infants and children can be easily prevented through careful supervision of the child during play time and eating time.

#### COMMON CHOKING HAZARDS

##### FOOD

Some foods NOT to give a child under 4 years old:

- hard, gooey or sticky candy
- popcorn
- hot dogs
- nuts and seeds
- chunks of meat or cheese
- whole grapes or cherries
- chunks of peanut butter
- raw vegetables
- raisins
- chewing gum

##### SMALL HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Keep these and other small items out of a child's reach:

- toys with removable small parts
- balloons
- coins
- marbles
- small balls
- pen or marker caps
- small buttons
- batteries

#### SIGNS OF CHOKING

- § If the child can speak or cough loudly, the airway is only partially blocked
- § Signs of choking with a completely blocked airway include:
  - § Coughing, gagging, high pitched noisy breathing
  - § Bluish lips or skin
  - § Holding the neck with one or both hands (an older child)

§ **If you are worried about your child's breathing – Phone 9-1-1**

#### CHOKING PREVENTION TIPS:

- § Learn basic life support skills (e.g. First Aid, Heimlich Maneuver, CPR)
- § Childproof your home by getting down to your child's level and removing small and dangerous items.
- § Test toys and other small items using a toilet paper tube – if it fits inside the tube, it is a choking hazard
- § Supervise mealtime and playtime (cut foods for infants and young children into pieces no larger than one half-inch)
- § Insist that older children eat at the table, or at least while sitting down. They should never run, walk, play, or lie down with food in their mouths.
- § Set an adult standard for meal time: eat at a table, eat slowly, take small pieces of food, and remember that children will follow their parents' and caregivers' examples.
- § Follow age recommendations on toy packages. Purchase toys that are appropriate for the child's physical and mental abilities.
- § Be aware of older children's toys (for small removable parts) and their actions. Many choking incidents occur when older siblings give dangerous foods, toys, or small objects to a younger sibling.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the American Red Cross of the National Capital Area at 703-584-8400 OR the American Heart Association for the Greater Washington Region at 703-941-8500 or to find out about classes in your area. The steps for taking action during a choking crisis are outlined on the website of the American Heart Association. THESE STEPS DO NOT REPLACE A QUALIFIED CPR / FIRST AID INSTRUCTION CLASS.